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PHILADELPHIA WOMAN SENTENCED TO THREE MONTHS FOR IMPORTING ILLEGAL DIET PILLS

PHILADELPHIA – Mimi Trieu, 46, of Philadelphia, was sentenced today to three months in prison for importing and distributing more than four million diet pills that contained a controlled substance, an anti-seizure medication, and a chemical solvent that is considered a possible carcinogen, announced United States Attorney Zane D. Memeger. Trieu pleaded guilty December 17, 2010, to an 18-count superseding indictment¹, including 11 counts of mail fraud, one count of conspiracy to smuggle illegal merchandise, and six counts of distribution of Sibutramine, a schedule IV controlled substance.

Trieu owned Hong Kong Beauty International, located at 5520 Whitaker Avenue in Philadelphia, which imported and distributed a variety of beauty products, including diet pills. Upon learning of the pills and the ingredients in the pills, the Food and Drug Administration (“FDA”) issued warnings to consumers on December 22, 2008 about the pills. The FDA warned that the pills are illegal and potentially harmful because they contained controlled substances and other undeclared ingredients that could cause serious side effects in some people, including elevated blood pressure, heart attacks, and strokes. Trieu, who had been buying and selling the pills since at least October 2008, continued to import and sell them until March 2010, even after learning that the capsules did not have FDA approval. She was indicted on May 10, 2010.

Trieu conspired to smuggle the illegal diet pills from China through the mail, using packages with customs declarations that falsely described the capsules as “gifts,” worth minimal amounts. Trieu falsely advertised the illegal diet capsules as containing natural ingredients, told some customers that the drugs were manufactured in Japan, and told one customer that the FDA warning was not true.

In addition to the prison term, U.S. District Court Judge John R. Padova ordered Trieu to pay a fine in the amount of \$5,000, complete three years of supervised release including nine months of home detention, forfeit \$250,000, and pay a special assessment of \$1,800. She is to report to prison April 11, 2011.

The case was investigated by the Food and Drug Administration Office of Criminal Investigations, the United States Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, and the Department of Homeland Security Office of Inspector General. It was prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Judy Goldstein Smith and Sarah L. Grieb.

¹An indictment is an accusation. A defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty.

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